

Which requirements for wood flooring surfaces?

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With these brief notes we would like to consider again the subject of the performance of wood-based flooring surfaces given the existence of a very different situation in this sector which, unfortunately, often brings also to a certain confusion to the operators.

To try to better understand the present situation we will examine two types of products: the floors made of veneered panels (with maximum thickness of the veneer layer of 2.5 mm) and parquet floors.

In order to complete the scenario, we will also mention the standard for wood floor coatings published in Italy as UNI 11622 in 2016.

THE WOOD VENEERED FLOOR COVERING

We begin by taking into consideration the European standard EN 14354, which specifies the test methods and the minimum requirements for this type of product. This standard was revised in 2017, maintaining in any case the classification in two categories (Domestic and Commercial), each of which is divided into three levels of final use (Moderate, General and Hard). So, the standard classifies six different levels of performance.

Let's take an example: the standard specifies that wear resistance must be measured with the abrasion resistance method indicating, in the case of using the method with abrasive papers, a minimum value of 900 rpm for the "lighter" level of use (Domestic - Moderate use) and at least 4,000 rpm for the most severe use category (Commercial - Hard use).

The standard also provides a labeling criterion, according to certain "pictograms".

This system then allows the producers to inform their customers about the performance of their products and to the end users to choose in a conscious way the one that best suits their needs, perhaps balancing and mediating their choice with the aesthetic characteristics and, obviously, also with the cost.



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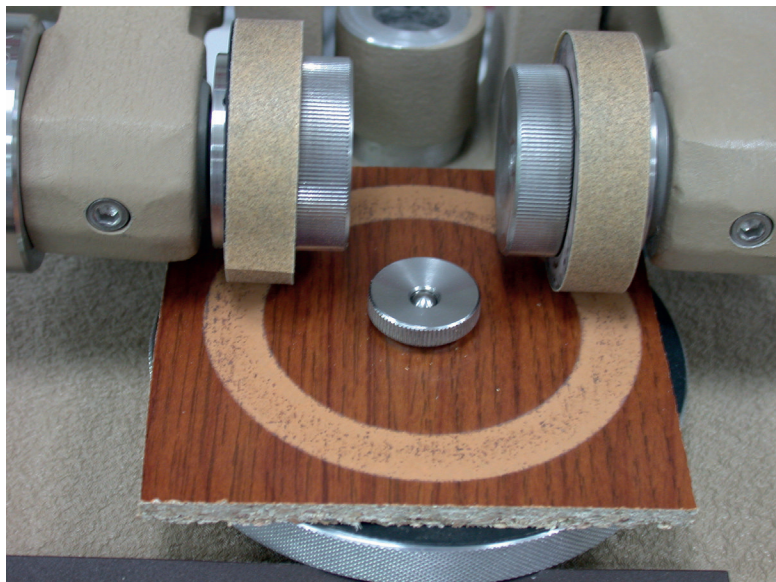
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THE PARQUET FLOORS

In the case of parquet, there are specific standards for assessing the resistance of parquet to abrasion (En 13696), indentation (En 13696) and contact with chemicals (En 13442), but these standards do not express any acceptability criteria.

They are therefore only test methods that can be used to compare various products, to improve them, to relate with suppliers or customers.

However, it can be pointed out that if at the standardization level there is no document containing minimum requirements for these products, the Ihd Institute of Dresden (Germany) has instead published a very detailed guideline being also divided into six classes similar to the previously presented. However, it is a document deriving from the traditions and experiences of the German market, not even having the value of an official standard.



THE STANDARD ON COATING MATERIALS

If it is true that for parquet there is no standard criterion for the acceptability of their performance provided by their surfaces, there is a standard - the UNI 11622-1, established in 2016 - which aims to be an instrument for the formulation and selection of the coating systems to be used for wooden floors.

This tool is primarily used by formulators, who can thus prepare coating materials in line with market needs and classify them accordingly to the performance achieved when applied under "standard" conditions.

The standard, in fact, specifies to coatings on substrates made of steamed beech and classifying them, based on the results achieved, in three categories "High-attendance", "Medium-attendance" and "Low-attendance". The market (flooring manufacturers, installers, and end users) can thus choose the coatings that best suit their needs but, we would like to stress again that this classification does not concern finished parquet, for which there is currently no reference standard.

CONCLUSIONS

We have therefore analyzed that there is a very diversified situation between the floors made of veneered panels and parquet.

In the first case there is a complete standard that defines the test methods, the minimum requirements and even the criterion for marking the floor, so that the performances are immediately visible and understandable by the market.

In the case of parquet, the situation is totally different: there are test methods, but there is no official value that can guide the market in the production and selection of products.

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For what concerns the standard on coating materials, we have again clarified that its field of application is not the finished parquet but, rather, the liquid coating which, on the basis of this standard, can consequently be classified into three different categories.

As anticipated in the introduction to these notes, the lack of a standard that establishes minimum requirements for parquet surfaces sometimes creates uncertainty and even confusion, especially when someone tries to force in this area the requirements that are actually defined for other products.

We hope, with these few notes, to have therefore contributed to clarify these issues and, perhaps, to stimulate some thoughts by the subjects operating in this sector.

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